

## Meeting Minutes

Buncombe County Agricultural Advisory Board - Buncombe Soil & Water Conservation District

49 Mount Carmel Road, Asheville, NC 28806 with optional Zoom

October 18, 2022, at 11 am

**Ag Advisory Board Members Present:** Chair David Lee, Vice-Chair Bruce Snelson, Terri Wells, Steve Duckett, Ed Bullock, Anne Grier, Annie Louise Perkinson.

**Others Present:** Ariel Zijp, Avni Naik, Bruce & Jean Larson, Jess Laggis, Tarana Wesley, & Angelica Tyler.

Meeting was called to order at 11:00 am by Chair David Lee.

### **Approval of the October 18, 2022, Meeting Agenda**

- **Steve Duckett made a motion to approve the October 18, 2022, meeting agenda, seconded by Terri Wells, and the motion passed on the vote.**

### **Approval of the September 20, 2022, Meeting Minutes**

- **Steve Duckett made a motion to approve the September 20, 2022, meeting minutes, seconded by Annie Louise Perkinson, and the motion passed on the vote.**

**Board Member Reports:** Jennifer Harrison will be attending the Strategic Plan briefing this afternoon to update Commissioners on staff's progress on the Strategic Plan goals.

**Chair Appointment:** Mr. Lee stated he and Ms. Wells discussed the potential of somebody else taking over his position as Chair of the board. The board had discussed the potential of Mr. Duckett taking over, and he stated that he was willing to do so.

- **Terri Wells made a motion to appoint Steve Duckett as Chair, seconded by Alan Land, and the motion passed on the vote.**

**VAD and EVAD Applications:** Ms. Naik presented the applications. There are six new VAD applications, five of which are for properties applying for conservation easements. Enrollment in the VAD/EVAD program helps these projects in the grant application rankings.

- **Terri Wells made a motion to approve the applications, seconded by David Lee, and the motion passed on the vote.**

**Farmland Preservation Report:** Ms. Zijp presented the farmland preservation report.

- **Easement Project Updates**

- Putting together 5 Grant Funding Applications– pre-appraisals, documents signed, pictures, maps, budgets, etc.
  - NCDAs- Scott Fisher
  - NCDAs – Will Harlan
  - NCDAs – Roger's Family Farm part 1: Roger's Family Trust
  - NCDAs- Roger's Family Farm part 2: David Rogers
  - USDA – Russ Roberson
- Starting survey work on 6 projects
  - Sluder Easement 90 acres
  - Ramsey Easement 40 acres
  - Anthony Cole Farm 38.2 acres
  - Gary Cole Farm 28.9 acres
  - Jasperwood Phase 1 - 113 acres
  - Jasperwood Phase 2 - 98 acres
- Deed work & Closing procedures

- Clark Easement –deed work
- Berner Easement –deed work
- SAHC Teague Property Easement – final document review with SAHC
- Splendor Valley LLC Easement – Deed work, appraisal
- GIS story map on the two conservation boards, why conservation is important, AAB and LCAB focus areas, and the county wide focus area
- Ms. Zijp introduced Ms. Tyler with the county’s communications department. Ms. Tyler will be helping the county provide increased access to board meetings for the public by recording and posting the meetings online.

**FY23 Donation Easement Project Presentation:**

Staff presented three donation projects and board members that conducted site visits spoke on the projects:

- Garrett Cove – Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC): Proximal to other conserved lands and abuts the county line; mostly forested; 101 acres. Ms. Wells spoke in favor of the project stating it is nearby protected properties in Buncombe County as well as some protected land over in Haywood County. Many locals in Sandy Mush have hiked the property, and the previous property owner took great care of the land. It was used to graze cattle because it’s fairly steep. Mr. Bulluck asked if there are or were any structures located on the property. There used to be a barn, but it is no longer there and there are no other structures. The property is forested, and a neighbor has a grazing lease that will be included in the easement language. While there are no structures currently, there is consideration for a farmstead in case they want to lease it out to beginning farmers.
- Bruce and Jean Larson: Property borders the Buncombe-Madison County line; there is no official right of way to property in Buncombe as of now - board members and landowners talked about options to provide access. The property is close to other protected lands in Sandy Mush and is all forested, there are no structures currently. Board members asked landowners if they had considered reserving house sites or farmsteads, they stated they had and decided they did not want to reserve any and the property isn’t suited for development due to the terrain. Their children aren’t interested in reserving any house sites, and if they wanted to be close to the property they would move to their home in Madison. Mr. and Mrs. Larson stated they had reached out to EcoForesters and will be getting a forest management plan in place in January. Board members that visited the property spoke in favor of the project, stating their only concern was that of access.
- Tarana Wesley: placing 31 acres out of the 45 acres into an easement; property is in wildlife PUV and wanting to preserve the 31 acres for the rock outcroppings and the wildlife that it supports (ex. rattlesnakes & bats). The property is close to two easements – one is still in the process of being closed. One part of the easement boundary goes to the road (for access). None of the current structures on the property will be included in the easement. Board members that visited the property spoke in favor of the project.

**FY23 Donation Easement Project Votes:**

- **David Lee made a motion to approve the three donation easement projects, seconded by Steve Duckett, and the motion passed on the vote.**

Ms. Zijp went over project transaction costs budget estimates for surveys, appraisals, attorney fees/closing costs (title insurance), & environmental assessments with the Board. Ms. Wells what typically caused large differences in transaction costs, and Ms. Zijp stated that surveys usually make a big difference because of things like whether the property had been surveyed recently, the property terrain and difficulty/ease navigating it. Mr. Bulluck asked about appraisers in the county – Ms. Zijp stated there are three in the area that specialize in easements, the one the county hires does a lot of experience in easements and has the most affordable rates.

**Announcements and Discussion:**

With no other announcements, the meeting was adjourned at 12:03 pm.